

**Statement of Congressman Ron Kind
In Support of the Water Resources Development Act, H.R. 1495
April 19, 2007**

MADAM SPEAKER, I RISE IN STRONG SUPPORT OF THIS BILL THAT WILL FINALLY MOVE FORWARD IMPORTANT CONSTRUCTION, NAVIGATION, AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECTS ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, GREAT LAKES, AND ELSEWHERE. IN PARTICULAR, H.R. 1495 WILL AUTHORIZE THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS' SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

ON THE EVE OF EARTH DAY, FOUNDED BY THE GREAT SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN GAYLORD NELSON, WHAT BETTER GIFT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN THAN THE LARGEST EVER INVESTMENT IN ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION IN THE RIVER'S HISTORY? THIS BILL WILL HAVE A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON WATER QUALITY, WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND RECREATION IN THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGION.

REAUTHORISATION OF THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING, AND IT HAS SEEN SOME IMPROVEMENT OVER THE YEARS. THE CURRENT BILL, FOR INSTANCE, INCLUDES AN IMPORTANT PROVISION REQUIRING THAT CONSTRUCTION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS ON THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI ACHIEVE EQUAL PROGRESS SO THAT CONSTRUCTION AND

NAVIGATION IMPROVEMENTS DO NOT DEGRADE THE RIVER ECOSYSTEM. THE WRDA BILL OF 1986 ESTABLISHED THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER SYSTEM AS THE ONLY WATERBODY IN THE NATION RECOGNIZED BY CONGRESS AS BOTH A “NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT ECOSYSTEM AND A NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT COMMERCIAL NAVIGATION SYSTEM,” SO IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE NEEDS OF THESE TWO ASPECTS OF THE RIVER ARE MET IN TANDEM.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION ALSO HAS RECOGNIZED THE ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE BASIN BY MAKING THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM A PRIORITY PROJECT IN THE CORPS BUDGET. A RELATIVELY MODEST PROGRAM WITH AUTHORIZED FUNDING OF \$33.5 MILLION, THE EMP HAS DEMONSTRATED REMARKABLE RESULTS IN RESTORING RIVER HABITATS ALL ALONG MY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT IN WESTERN WISCONSIN AND BEYOND. AND ITS LONG-TERM RESOURCE MONITORING PROGRAM HAS PRODUCED INVALUABLE DATA AND KNOWLEDGE.

MADAM SPEAKER, IT IS ESPECIALLY FITTING THAT WE PASS THIS BILL TODAY IN LIGHT OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY THAT EMP CELEBRATED LAST YEAR. THIS BILL, H.R. 1495, AND THE ACCOMPANYING MANAGER’S AMENDMENT CONTAIN LANGUAGE ASSURING THAT THE NAVIGATION AND ECOSYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY PLAN WILL CONTINUE THE EMP’S MISSION, INCLUDING LONG-TERM RESOURCE MONITORING.

BUT THIS BILL WILL ADDRESS LONG-STANDING NEEDS WELL BEYOND THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI. THIS COUNTRY'S WATER RESOURCES INFRASTRUCTURE WAS LARGELY CONSTRUCTED 70 OR MORE YEARS AGO, AND MUCH OF IT HAS FALLEN INTO VARIOUS STATES OF DISREPAIR AND NEGLECT. HURRICANE KATRINA SO CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED TO THE WORLD THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS LACK OF ATTENTION. REAUTHORIZATION OF WRDA IS A NECESSARY FIRST STEP IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR CITIZENS, INDUSTRY, AND ENVIRONMENT.

I URGE ALL OF MY COLLEAGUES TO JOIN ME IN SUPPORT OF THIS VITAL LEGISLATION SO THAT RESIDENTS OF LOW-LYING AREAS CAN BE REASSURED THAT THE LEVEES THAT PROTECT THEM WILL BE MADE ADEQUATE, SO THAT FARMERS WILL KNOW THEY WILL BE ABLE TO SHIP THEIR GRAIN DOWNRIVER TO BE EXPORTED TO FOREIGN MARKETS, AND HUNTERS, ANGLERS, AND BIRDWATCHERS WILL KNOW THAT THE HABITAT THEY KNOW AND LOVE WILL BE MAINTAINED.

I THANK YOU, AND I YIELD BACK MY TIME.